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THOUGHTS

ON

THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION.

BY AN OLD WHIG.

Jas. Mason Esq.

"An administration may be so bad as to throw a great majority into
"the opposition, as a good administration will reconcile to the court
"many of the most passionate lovers of liberty."

Hume's Essay on Parties.

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THOUGHTS, &c.

THE death of Mr. Pitt roused the public mind to decision and force. The necessity of forming an entirely new administration was at once obvious to the country, and all men seemed to agree in wishing that those powerful and splendid talents, which had hitherto been employed in foretelling or lamenting the disasters which have ensued, should be brought forward into situations where they might be positively and essentially effective, that the resources of the nation being applied as vigorously as possible to meet the emergency of the times, we might in some measure redeem our past errors, or (to use less censorious terms) oppose that course of events which seemed to be hurrying us on to destruction.

The word ruin, I well know, is of vague and indefi-

nite meaning, and many will deem the phrase here used much too strong, but the better sort, I fear, will assent to its justice, and think that a very small further progress in our late career would have reduced us to a situation in which no other term could have been applicable to us. France, our ancient and restless rival, is so powerful, that if its Emperor determined to organize, I believe, the greatest, and certainly the best part of Europe under that name, it would be his policy, not his power we should question. He might draw a line from the mouth of the Weser through Moravia to the confines of Hungary, and taking his station in the centre, declare the whole of the fertile region between him and the Mediterranean to be France. The last experiment to overthrow him has in all probability established him and his family on a basis not to be shaken, and, wherever may be the fault, whether here or amongst our allies, it is to be feared that the dynasty of Buonaparte is now firmly erected on the ruins of the houses of Austria and Bourbon. In every former period of our history, in every former war, we never once heard of our existence being one of the objects for which we were contending; our safety was a point, the bare mention of which would have exposed a man to ridicule. Like people in full health, we should have thought any inquiries on a subject so entirely decided upon, absolutely insulting. It was to determine the succession of princes; it was to preserve,

with nice and delicate accuracy, the balance of power on the continent; it was to guard the uninterrupted possession, not of a distant island, not of a petty state, but of an immense continent—these used to be our objects—even when they were secured, it was still a matter of discussion whether peace was justifiable, and whether we had gained enough. The great question being decided, in the opinion of some, subordinate points were to be settled with the most scrupulous accuracy. Cession was to be weighed against cession, value was to be balanced against value, where even the smallest territories were concerned, with an almost mercantile attention. At the peace of 1762, the voice of the people overcame the more ardent, vigorous, and exacting patriotism of Chatham, and that voice determined rightly. We were indeed so great, that we could afford to be generous and merciful; we had the enviable opportunity of shewing our superiority by our magnanimity; generosity seemed to be alone required to fill up the measure of our national grandeur—these times are passed—all this is reversed; of later years, the object of our war was so bold as to be chimerical, and as if we were perpetually to mark out the constancy of that moral law which governs the world, our humiliation is proportioned to our presumption. Not rendered wise by the history of former crusades, it was our boast to combat principle, and overthrow opinion; an object at once so vast and so fleeting, could never be

specifically obtained, and the continuance of a war so indefinite in its purpose, could only depend on the temper of the belligerent powers; but however vague in design, its consequences are certain and decisive. In the eye of mankind, this is no time for concession, for magnanimity; every surrender wears a dubious character; the dangerous, because dazzling and imposing sentiment of honor, keeps us aloof from conciliation; we are so situated, that passions, not the most honorable, assume the appearance of intrepidity, perseverance, glory, and all the higher virtues; feeling our real degradation, we deem it necessary to bluster, that we may appear strong. The worst of this is, that in the midst of such a tumult, we deceive ourselves more than the enemy; yet is it most necessary that we should be roused to a sense of our real situation.—The war we are now waging is for ourselves alone, our allies on the continent are ruined, apparently for ever; there are no bounds to the power of Buonaparte on the continent. We may may take the Cape, we may take a distant island or two, but it is for our safety we are fighting—it is invasion we fear. We hide ourselves behind the barriers of our rocks, we depend upon the storms and our fleets, our object is security, our glory is flight—such is our situation; it should be described more powerfully, in order that we may anxiously avoid a system to which we must ascribe such unprecedented calamities; that at the same time, perceiving the

state into which we have sunk, we may not expect miracles from the present administration, illustrious as they are for talents and virtues; and that placing full confidence in them, we may answer every call to regain, as far as possible, our station in the world, and prepare to repel the threatened invasion, if all ideas of peace must be considered as visionary, by real, solid, and substantial measures of defence.

But although the danger of invasion appears to me considerable, I cannot persuade myself to think that on the commencement of this new administration, this new political æra, it is the only subject to be discussed; there is another of equal consequence to us—indeed it is indissolubly connected with the former, for we may rest assured (the history of all ages and nations may convince us of it) that the vigour we shall display in opposition to an invading enemy, will be proportioned to the force and energy with which we have been in the habit of guarding the integrity and purity of our constitution. It becomes us therefore to enquire most vigilantly into the state of this constitution, and to examine in what situation are the prerogatives of the crown, in what the honor and character of the nobility, in what the rights and privileges of the people, are these constituent parts of our commonwealth entire and unimpaired? are they each in its place? while the balance has been de-

stroyed abroad, have we preserved it on a smaller, though to us a more important scale amongst ourselves? It was the opinion of Blackstone, that the power of the crown, however limited it was by acts of parliament, at and since the revolution, had almost received a compensation from the vast acquisition of force arising from the riot act, the standing army, and the immense, incalculable, and all pervading influence attending the national debt. Blackstone wrote his Lectures between the years 1753 and 1758, when the national debt was about seventy millions, it is now approaching to seven hundred millions. The tendency of the funding system to increase the influence of the crown, does not appear to have been sufficiently explained: this is not merely direct by means of the immense number of officers (all under the patronage of the crown) necessary to collect revenue sufficient to pay off the interest of the long-standing debts, to which we are still perpetually adding with such unsparing profusion. On this ground, it is true, the evil is most alarming and tremendous, yet, there is another mode of considering the subject not enough insisted upon. I mean the tendency of the funding system, when carried to any thing like the excess it has reached in this country, to erect a new order of men, such as annuitants, fund-dealers, and stock-jobbers, on the ruins of the landed interest, and the ancient nobility of the realm; this seems to be done by a two-fold operation. First, It is plain that to a

profuse and expensive minister, whose whole policy is war, there can be no men of such real consequence as those who will lend him money; of course he will be anxious to advance them in every possible mode; they and the minister are the mutual supports of each other; they are connected with him by a state necessity; they, or their representatives at Lloyd's, are the coadjutors of his government: but then it must be observed, these men, though of great importance, have nothing in them of the spirit of independence; avarice is an insatiable passion; though very rich, they are the creatures of the minister, that they may add a second half million to their treasures; if any should deem themselves opulent enough, they aim at less substantial though equally attractive honors, and thus it is that government, however destructive their policy, however ruinous their expenditure, have always a sure support in the city, who indeed, are interested to support them in exact proportion to their profusion. That there should be a class of men in the community, rising into power and grandeur by the profusion of the minister, which in the common course of things ruins all alike, is paradoxical and anomalous, and hence it is evident, that there is an extrinsic weight upon the constitution, throwing it out of its usual and natural direction. Secondly, While the merchants are making good bargains for themselves on lending the minister money, who mortgages to them both past and future revenues, the weight of the taxes fall chiefly on the

landed interest; lands and houses are visible and tangible things, which no collector can pass over, but a merchant has a thousand ways of evading taxes, that even the most sharp-sighted inquisitor would never think of. Not to mention, that by the terms of the loan, the various modes the minister adopts of serving those he is so much obliged to, and above all the enlarged field for adventure * and gambling, by the increased amount of the stock, the merchant more than indemnifies himself for any additional tax he is called upon to pay. By this means, while he is rising, the possessor of landed property is proportionably falling, and his positive importance is infinitely increased by the depression of the nobility and the landed interest. There is an observation of Mr. Hume's, in his Essay on Parties, which seems to foretel the state to which we are now reduced, at the same time that it marks his opinion upon such a crisis. "There has been an attempt in England," he remarks, "to divide the landed and trading part of the nation, but without success.

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* It is objected that if amidst the increased opportunities of adventure, fortunes are made, fortunes are also lost, and that the hazard is equal to the chance of success. This however, does not appear to be true. In perilous and fluctuating times, the men who will succeed, are those who are already eminently opulent, because they can bear temporary reverses, and the circumstance that the great fund-dealer rises on the ruin of several less wealthy than himself, aggravates the evil of which we complain.

The interests of the two bodies are not really distinct, and never will be so, till our public debts increase to such a degree as to become altogether intolerable and oppressive." If then the two bodies, the landed and the trading interest, are, as appears undoubted, not only distinct, but opposed to each other, the opinion of this profound observer on the amount of the debt, merits the most acute investigation. We may with equal justice take the converse of this proposition. When this remark was written it displayed the sagacity, the prophetic spirit of the author. It is now verified and clear. When the weight of the taxes is enormous, the part of the community which will suffer most and be first crushed by the pressure, is for the reasons above stated, and others equally obvious, the landed interest. The last resource (which is now adopted) is to tax the annuitants and fund-dealers themselves, by assailing their income. This measure, however, as far as regards the rise of a new aristocracy on the ruins of the old will be of little avail, for at all events, this tax being general and pressing equally upon the two bodies, the evil arising from the mischief already done, the previous inequality remains as it was, but if we suppose that many persons of small landed property were almost crushed before, it is obvious that the smallest additional imposition may utterly destroy them, while the funded and money interest, having escaped so much pressure hitherto, could bear one of far greater magnitude. In leaving this sub-

ject for the present, as far as it regards the rise of a new aristocracy, it is impossible not to mention the accession of strength such an order receives from the immense fortunes, which of late years have been made in the East and West Indies, fortunes frequently as offensive by the methods in which they were obtained, as those in which they are spent. The consequences of this depression and expulsion of the good old landed interest are absolutely fatal. All that is high-minded, active, generous, in an aristocracy gives way to a sleepy, vulgar insolence, that base and degraded feeling which makes a man content to be the object of tyranny, that he may be a tyrant in his turn. Should such an aristocracy finally prevail, a cold, impotent, sluggish, miserable despotism can alone ensue.

With regard to the standing army, if it was formidable in 1753, how much more so now? We are become a military people; the militia have been lately so much embodied, that, in a constitutional point of view, they are to be feared almost equally with the regulars. The volunteers also, from the mode in which they have been managed, have added incalculably to the influence and patronage of the crown. It may be said, indeed, that in the present state of civilization and information, we have little to fear from direct force—this is true; the soldier, it must be hoped, would be as little disposed to obey, as the monarch to in-

force any commands to destroy the liberties of the subject; and therefore the vast increase of our army is chiefly dangerous from swelling the influence and patronage which are already unbounded. In this point of view a large military establishment must still create the most serious alarm; for surely it is no consolation to be told, that the sword will spare what influence and luxury have already destroyed.

These natural and obvious causes have been extremely fomented and inflamed by the spirit of the times. The danger of French revolutionary principles is certainly past, but there is great danger to the cause of rational liberty, from the alarm they have occasioned. This consequence has never been sufficiently attended to, and the indifference of the public mind, on a subject of such extreme importance, is, itself, a proof of the progress already made in the evil of which we complain. To examine most closely the general effect of the late tremendous revolution, is of imperious necessity; such an inquiry cannot be embraced in the limits of a pamphlet, yet perhaps a few observations may be excused, thrown out with a view of exciting others more equal to such a subject, rather than with the hope of meriting the attention of the contemplative and philosophic mind.

The period immediately preceding the revolution was

marked all over Europe with singularly rapid strides in every branch of knowledge, and in none more than in that which relates to political and moral subjects. These must be connected together, because they are, in fact so united, that every political subject can only be fully discussed by considering it in a moral point of view; and if a moral question should not involve politics, it is by not proceeding so far. The science of government is, in truth, only an extended system of morals. The real and important advances made on these questions, immediately before the revolution, were sometimes seized by the enthusiastic, and pushed by them to a dangerous extreme. Designing, ambitious, or malicious men would doubtless take advantage of the spirit of the times to promote their own sinister views. The former class were made the tools of the latter; and the government of France, tottering of itself, was the first which fell before their united attacks. The mob of Paris became practically the sovereign, and a few raging demagogues professing the sanction of the people, and holding forth perpetually the abused name of liberty, and every virtue, committed a series of unexampled and unheard of crimes. So far from softening the representation of these crimes, let them be invested with new horrors, or be described in the exaggerating and inflaming language of Mr. Burke; so much stronger reason is there to fear the dangerous consequences of the alarm they are calculated to inspire. One extreme

usually leads to its opposite, and therefore it becomes us to be very much on our guard, lest in flying from the abuse of good and useful principles, we discard those principles altogether. The effects of such a temper are perceivable in France to a most dreadful degree. All the great advances which were made before the revolution, on subjects the most essential to human happiness are now rejected and despised. Books are daily published with great success, maintaining the exploded system of commercial prohibitions, and defending colonial and domestic slavery, not on the ground of policy, but as abstractedly right. Many of the lighter publications are marked by a wretched, tasteless, and undisguised profligacy, which would be beneath criticism, did it not prove how entirely circumstances may level the most polished people with the most barbarous and gross. This state of the public mind is much to be dreaded, not only in a general view, but as portending a second convulsion. It is the other extreme; it is the dull and senseless interval of delirium; from the reaction we have every thing to fear. The alternative is dreadful, France and Europe will continue to rush between extremes, with a horrible waste of human life, or else a gloomy and heavy ignorance will ensue, hardly distinguished from that which marked the middle ages. The influence of France is almost unbounded, her principles, it is to be feared, will be the principles, as her language is the language of Europe. Those nations which

are not crushed by her power, are employed in providing means for its diminution, or their own defence; and war, and the preparations for war, are not favorable to the cultivation of the mind. When we add to the influence of France, the constant wars which that influence will probably impose on all nations who have yet escaped her arms, when we consider the wretched principles of her government, supported as they are with great eloquence by her authors, and look forward to the eternal state of warfare her immense power will occasion, in which talents will probably take but one direction, it is impossible to entertain apprehensions too gloomy of the consequences which may ensue, at least on the continent. National manners will co-operate with the necessity of the times. All governments will become purely military, and as there will be no road to preferment, no road to honor, but through military excellence, the very taste which is usually thrown around a court of this sort, from the spirit of honor and gallantry that pervades it, will tend in the same unfortunate direction as the causes I have mentioned, and check any attempt to acquire distinction by the arts of peace. There are no effects of the French revolution, that seem in any ways to balance this mischief; awful lessons were taught indeed, on the danger of delaying necessary reform, on the dreadful day of account that awaits the profuse and profligate expenditure of the public money, on the evil consequence of interfering in the internal affairs of other nations; and on the madness of mingling passion and romance with

great political concerns. These lessons were taught with irresistible force; but a nation, it is said, never grows wiser by experience. On the other hand, the fatal effects of the revolution, its dead repose, its listless torpor, only interrupted by efforts of active ignorance, spread universally. Government has not to fear for its own safety, but it has to fear for the utter degradation of the public mind, it has to fear lest the people should not be worth governing. For I can yet scarcely believe that a Prince of the House of Brunswick, whom the people of England have raised to the most glorious eminence in the world, for the purpose of executing their collected will, and directing their collected force, would stoop to accept the servile homage of a benighted and a fallen nation, when he had been taught to expect and enabled to receive that, "proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart," with which a free people are accustomed to surround the throne of a limited and patriot sovereign. Yet by what perverse and monstrous bias of the mind is it, that during the late revolution we heard so much of the danger of French principles, but that now we hear solely of the arms of France! Can one part of our constitution only be endangered? Is the monarch every thing in this country, and are the people nothing? Sunk however as we are, both in positive privileges and in those feelings which should lead us to regain them by all legal and con-

stitutional means, it is most true, that any exertion to prevent or dispel the dark and growing evil, must be made here. The only coalition now left us to form, is a coalition of wisdom and information, against blindness and ignorance; unfortunately the late proceedings on the Continent preclude all other attempts. We have now to wage a bloodless contest, which perhaps may be in the end as effective, as one more noisy and obtrusive. Let us always remember, that of the power of France, as in every other instance of encroaching and despotic violence, the best ally is ignorance.

From the power of the crown, which appears to me, under the influence of causes, some of which have been thus lightly and most inadequately mentioned, to have lately increased, and to be increasing to a most alarming excess, I proceed to the state of the peerage; if we were melancholy on the former topic, this certainly is not calculated to relieve our spirits. Is not the nobility, by the great numbers which have been added to their order, degraded beyond any example, except what may be adduced from the worst and falling period of the Roman empire. Does it any longer answer its design? as a fountain of honour, you say; but the stream is too wide to be either strong or clear, and it flows over such a variety of surface, and so near every man's door, it is so weakened by its extent, and obscured and darkened

by the dregs it collects in its unrestrained and unchannelled passage, that all the purposes it was intended to embrace, whether to adorn or fertilize, are utterly defeated.

The existence of an ancient nobility may be considered as the sure basis of a valuable sentiment, equally favorable to refinement of manners, to courage, and to genuine liberty. There is, perhaps, no institution which can in any way supply its place. It is precisely the order, which all the best writers upon political subjects, have marked out as a necessary part of a wise form of government; that order, which, if they had the power, would not have the interest, or if they had the interest, would not have the power, to overturn the constitution. The monarch will not make common cause with the nobility against the liberty of the subject, because, in so doing, his power would merge in theirs, and the monarchy would become an aristocracy; the nobility will not league with the monarch for such a purpose, because they in the end will fall with the rest of their fellow subjects. Accordingly, we see that the early history of almost all the nations of Europe, of those unsettled times, when men express their feelings and inclinations by, acts of open force, is a series of struggles between the sovereign and the nobles. They reduced the power of the crown; and the spirit of commerce, at least in this country, reduced their power. Where this fortunate chain of events

existed not, still was the despotism of one softened incalculably by the existence of a spirited and honorable nobility, as is strikingly evident in the history of France; nor must we forget the high chivalrous spirit it engenders, so much applauded by Mr. Burke, as the "cheap defence of nations;" a phrase, the justice of which, as in most other of his political observations, can only be questioned on the extent to which he applies it. Undoubtedly this spirit is by no means sufficient of itself to protect and defend a nation in a great extremity. The example of Poland, where it reigned exclusively and to excess, is sufficient to prove its inefficacy for this purpose; but where it is combined with the energy and force of a free people, a people deeply impressed with a sense of constitutional blessings, a people armed with the consciousness that they are fighting for whatever is valuable in existence, all history proves that it is an admirable excitement to those deeds of valour and heroism, which by their example have an effect perfectly electrical on armies, which, in the first instance, possessed such strong motives to exertion. It seems to be to an army, what honor is to an individual; the last finish, and the warmest principle of animation to popular vigour. Indeed we shall always find the feeling attached to high hereditary descent encouraged to a great degree in every state which boasts of freedom, valour, or the arts of highly civilized life. In the best days of the Athenian and Roman

republics in was remarkable. Numerous instances might be adduced of men under disgrace or misfortune, making their most effectual appeal to the people, on the ground of an illustrious ancestry. It was in the days of the Fabii and the Scipios that Rome flourished in arts and in arms, when it was her boast to spare the humble and overcome the proud. When Tiberius tarnished the purple, and sapped the foundations of the empire, his first measure was to croud the senate with a multitude of unknown adventurers; with low favorites, who administered to his prejudice and his pleasures; with incompetent ministers, with the plunderers of distant provinces, and all the rabble of Rome. On this subject, which, I am aware, creates great difference of opinion amongst very enlightened persons, it may perhaps be advantageous to produce the authority of a man, who at least cannot be suspected of a bias against the liberty of the subject; this is Algernon Sydney; one of the principal subjects of his censure and declamation against the government of his day, was the degradation of the nobility by the perpetual addition of new members to that order. He calls the change, produced by this means, stupendous. "Nevertheless," he says, in his answer to Sir Robert Filmer, "it may be worth our pains to inquire what our author means by nobility. If such, as at this day, by means of patents obtained for money, or by favor, without any regard to merit in the persons or their ancestors, are called dukes,

marquises, &c. I give him leave to impute as late and base an original to them as he pleases, without fearing that the rights of our nation can thereby be impaired; and am content, that if the king do not think it right to support the dignity of his own creatures, they may fall. But if by noblemen we are to understand such as have been ennobled by the virtues of their ancestors, manifested in services done to their country; I say, that all nations, amongst whom virtue has been esteemed, have had a great regard to them and their posterity." Again, "It was not to be imagined, that through the weakness of some, and the malice of others, those dignities should, by degrees, be turned into empty titles, and become rewards of the greatest crimes and the vilest services; or that the noblest of their descendants, for want of them, should be brought under the name of commoners, and deprived of all privileges, except such as are common to them with their grooms. Such a stupendous change being in process of time insensibly introduced, the foundations of that government, which they had established, were removed, and the superstructure overthrown. The balance by which it subsisted was broken, and it is as impossible to restore it, as for most of those, who at this day go under the name of noblemen, to perform the duties required from the ancient nobility of England." To this Whig of former times, let me add one of more modern date, as the best close and sanction of my opinions, the ever-lament-

ed marquis of Rockingham, whose principal and everlasting eulogium it will be, to have pursued on this and every other subject, a system directly the reverse to that of the late Mr. Pitt.

But if the vast increase of the nobility destroys the utility of the institution, as far as it is considered to be the foundation of a high-minded and noble feeling, still more directly does it defeat its other equally valuable purpose, as a reward for services done to the country. A peerage will be soon thought not worth having. Who will fight, who will shed his blood, who will devote his mind to serve his country either in council or in arms, for a reward so easily obtained, and so dubiously and equivocally bestowed? To do the late Premier justice, he was fully aware of the mischief he was causing. He never wished for a seat in the house of Lords, and while he crouded it with all sorts of people, he was both too wise and too proud to make one of the number. His example is said to have been followed by more than one illustrious commoner since his decease. They may act thus with more dignity, because with greater consistency.

If the destruction of the nobility, or which is the same thing, the perversion of all its useful purposes, was ever to be deprecated, it is surely peculiarly dangerous and ruinous

at present, when it is plain that the commercial interest has acquired far too great an ascendancy. The merchants possess the East Indies by charter, the West Indies by mortgage, by the purchase of boroughs they are obtaining a great parliamentary influence, by their overbearing opulence they are expelling the landed gentry, by the establishment of naval and army committees, they become the rewarders of services done to the country. At such a time to lighten the opposite scale, to destroy the only institutions, which might counteract this overwhelming spirit, displays such a total disregard to the most obvious and fundamental principles of a monarchical government, that really the first sensation on such a conduct, must be astonishment at its extreme imprudence. I know, I feel perfectly the extent of the obligations we owe to commerce. It overthrew the Stewarts, it gave us liberty, and all the countless blessings that follow in the train of liberty. But it may extend too far. The liberty it gave, it may destroy; the strength it inspired it may enervate; the life with which it animated us, it may paralize; the spirit of commerce is valuable chiefly in adversity; at its ease, in its prosperity, it is coarse, voluptuous, and cowardly; indolent to excess, and willing to make any sacrifice for the enjoyment of repose; holding out plunder, and unable to defend itself from the temptations it awakens; admirable in overthrowing evil, but useless, incompetent, and dangerous in establishing good. Merchants, as a body, have

no business with state affairs; they are wretched managers of any revenues but their own—the state of the East India company's affairs sufficiently proves this assertion; they possess an exclusive trade, and an immense territorial revenue, and yet so far from returning any compensation to the nation for the advantages they enjoy, so far from paying the annual half million, which was one of the conditions of their charter, they now receive two millions from the public, to enable them to discharge the interest of their funded debt, which amounts to twelve millions. Indeed their difficulties and embarrassments seem only to be exceeded by the guilty violence of their expedients, and their insatiable appetite for plunder.

In searching for instances to inforce these observations on the danger of the commercial spirit being carried to excess, the most evident, at least in modern times, is the state of the united provinces. This country seems to have passed through all its stages with a rapidity only to be accounted for by the recollecton of its greatness being founded entirely on commerce, and in close analogy to human life, to exhibit, in a very short review, the vigorous energy of youth, the steady prosperity of manhood, and the decrepitude and ruin of age. Liberated from the oppressive tyranny of Spain, she started up into independent grandeur with a force that astonished all Europe. In the

course of her history she opposed with success the most powerful nations leagued against her, and became the bulwark of the protestant religion, and the liberties of the continent. Of late years, her vigour seems to have decayed in proportion to the rapidity and height of her elevation, and she has perhaps been the most suffering victim of French aggression. She rose with the energies of commerce, she has fallen under its luxuries, and she has proved that nations, like individuals, may perish by too violent an enjoyment of the means of their existence. America seems to be making in the new world, the experiment which has thus failed in the old. Disdaining those theories which recommend a balance and poise of orders as essential to a wise and stable form of government, and those ancient institutions, to which, on this side the Atlantic, we owe much of the happiness, certainly much of the brilliancy of our political and moral being, she has established a commonwealth in which there is but one description of people, and in which the only claim to superiority can arise from the transient duties of office, or natural or self-acquired advantages. Whether this extreme simplicity will be found compatible with the vigor necessary for maintaining internal peace, and external security, is scarcely a question. Her present prosperity, in these respects, (indeed in the former she has already suffered considerable interruption, and the spirit of party and faction is daily gaining ground)

must be ascribed to the singularity of her situation, which is that of a new colony, and to her remoteness from all other nations. This last advantage will continue to operate till her acquired wealth begins to hold out sufficient plunder to defray the expense and hazard of a voyage to obtain it. In the mean time, the enthusiasm of panegyric seems fast subsiding in the acknowledgment that there exists a coldness and stiffness of manner, a mercenary regard to self, a want of taste in feeling, thinking, and acting, which render America, in spite of the pleasing vivacity of a rising state, her freedom from taxes and other substantial conveniencies, no very elegible situation for any European who has formed a just estimate of human life.

It rests for us now to touch upon what remain of the privileges of the people. This part of the subject, indeed, must be considered as having been in a great measure discussed, as far as so important a topic can be considered as discussed at all in this cursory manner, by the observations already made. The parts of our political system are so blended together and so nicely balanced, that the least derangement of one throws the whole into confusion. The influence of the crown for the reasons above stated has increased to a vast excess, and the intermediate order between it and the people is to all good constitutional purposes nearly

destroyed, consequently the increased weight of the sceptre falls unimpeded and unbroken upon the people.

The rights of the people are of course encroached upon in proportion as the power of the monarch surpasses its constitutional boundaries. That this power is most alarming, is obvious to every thinking mind; and as its causes are regularly progressive and without any limit, which it is possible to specify (for even in peace, the national debt will probably be annually increased, and our army kept on little less than a war-establishment) it becomes the people to be perpetually on the watch, lest all their remaining liberty should by degrees be swallowed up in the continually increasing, and treacherously silent vortex of the prerogative. There are, perhaps, no new barriers which can be raised to guard us from this apparently overwhelming evil. A rigid attention to the public expenditure, if peace should be found practicable, will certainly have this tendency. This however will check the further progress of the evil, rather than repair its past ravages; as for those desperate remedies which it has lately been the fashion to recommend, on the subject of the national debt, they will require a very deep, and a very long consideration. The other expedient, which is generally brought forward to guard against the influence of the crown, is a reform in the representation. This I believe to be a most desirable

measure; however, it is seriously to be hoped that at the present moment, even this measure will not be pressed, either in or out of parliament, in defiance of those circumstances which must prevent its being carried into effect. It will be objected that this plea of circumstances is always adopted by men in power to justify the desertion of their former principles: it is so; yet this plea, though frequently false and always suspicious, may be good and unanswerable. If ever it may be admitted, as surely it were easy to put cases where it could not be refused, it must be admitted now. The country can want no new pledges from Mr. Fox of his sincerity in the cause of rational and constitutional liberty; he has sustained it, with all the weight and authority of his extraordinary talents, through every species of contumely, obloquy, and proscription to this his venerable age. We may be assured he will endeavour, by all the means in his power, to restore to the people that weight in the scale of the constitution which they ought to possess. To suppose that he will not eagerly embrace every practicable expedient for this purpose, is to entertain a supposition which cannot, in the opinion of any impartial observer, affect Mr. Fox, but is infinitely disgraceful to the authors of it. It is entirely necessary for the salvation of the country, (though this may have the appearance of a cant phrase, I am perfectly convinced of its justice) that Mr. Fox should be in office. The department

he has chosen is, that, perhaps, which most imperiously requires reform, and his mind is equal to its difficulties. Our diplomacy has, of late years, been so managed by our ambassadors abroad, and the vindication of those ambassadors has been so impotently and miserably conducted at home, that we have exposed ourselves to the contempt and ridicule, both of friendly and hostile nations. The various dispatches which have been lately given to the world bear not the most distant resemblance to that stile, either in matter or in manner, which should mark the negotiations of a great people. Some are disgraced by a pert flippancy, which would not be approved of in a personal or private pique; others by an emulation in argument, an university exercise in words, far more calculated to shew off the ambassador than his country; others by a dull cold formality, which explains nothing, and seems to sacrifice the most essential interests, in the present new situation of Europe, to the preservation of an ancient ceremony, to the punctilio of a visit or a bow. Against some of our ambassadors, indeed, heavier accusations have been brought, which are justly disbelieved here, but which have been so enforced, it is said, as to make considerable impression against us on the continent. How comes it that we are not above suspicion on such subjects? Mr. Fox is preciseley the man to retrieve this dreadful state of things. His great power, with all the best characteristics of power,

simplicity, firmness, generosity, and liberality, as it eminently qualifies him for any important duty, so, perhaps, it peculiarly forms him for the office he has chosen. But this great reform cannot be accomplished in a day. He must be a minister, and a minister for a great length of time, to achieve this important and essential work: He has not only to change men, not only to adopt new measures, but to form a new system, to infuse a new spirit: this requires time; and, therefore, every rational man will most fervently hope that all lesser differences being buried in oblivion, all that miserable persecuting rancour, which of late years has been so utterly disgraceful and ruinous to us, being banished from our minds, the whole country may give him a full, cordial, ardent, and unanimous support.

To return from this digression. With regard to those severe and oppressive laws which were passed during the alarm occasioned by the French revolution, they have expired with that alarm. The parties that opposed each other most violently during the delirium of that dreadful time, have now coalesced, and it is to be hoped that the genuine principles of the constitution, which perhaps no party would have deserted but under the irresistible impression of fear, will now be pursued by all with fresh vigor and unabating zeal.

This then is our situation at the close of Mr. Pitt's life and administration. The power of France is uncontrolable on the continent, and its duration, if possible, is still more undefinable than its extent. At home, the influence of the crown is increased to a most alarming degree; the privileges of the people are proportionably sunk and endangered, and the nobility, as to any good and useful purpose, may be considered as almost annihilated. In this melancholy review, we must also mention the enormous weight of taxation, which breaks the heart and spirit of the people, and tends to destroy all capacity for exertion. To these evils we must add that torpor, not the least alarming symptom of the times, which is creeping over all ranks of the community, upon all political affairs. This is ascribable to the causes before stated, and more, perhaps, to that wretched system of juggling, finesse, trick, and legerdemain, (it deserves no higher titles) which for these last fourteen years has been played off so clumsily before the nation. A war, the alledged causes of which were perpetually changed; at one time, the opening of the Scheldt, at another, the annexation of Belgium, at another the re-establishment of monarchy in France, and the destruction of Jacobinism, at another security and indemnity; negotiations entered into which had all the appearance of insincerity, and which were afterwards openly declared to have been intended to deceive the people into an approbation of

the war; the Irish union, a measure conducted with so much chicanery and corruption, and at so great an expense of every good and valuable principle, that whatever may be its advantages in itself, (which may be doubted) the means employed in accomplishing it, must more than balance the most fortunate result. At the close of the period when these scenes had been acting, the minister resigning his office on grounds generally understood, and as generally applauded. On his departure from the treasury bench, pronouncing upon his successors a most eloquent and elaborate panegyric; not long afterwards, however, characterising those he had thus lavishly praised with every term of reproach, and acting in union with his old enemies, to drive them from their places; by the aid of this union accomplishing his purpose, and again taking his place as minister, to the exclusion of those, both friends and enemies, to whose talents and exertions his success was owing, and consistently to close the whole, afterwards acting as colleague with the men whom he had thus praised and condemned, made ministers, and driven from their stations, exalted to the skies, and trampled under foot, and this when the grounds of his original resignation were stronger than before. I do not arraign the motives of Mr. Pitt; his friends, his lamenting and applauding friends, from their knowledge of the secret history of these transactions may, perhaps, excuse or justify them, but I speak of the effect these things must have on the people, the in-

sulted, outraged, bleeding people of England. All must appear delusion. Reconciliations and quarrels must seem equally insincere; political life must be thought a mere play, at which they are called upon (and with a very considerable expense) to applaud the exertions of the best speaker, or the most successful manager." Men and measures will soon become indifferent to them, and they will little care what form of government they live under, whether a limited or an absolute monarchy; whether a foreign or domestic sovereign. Considering Mr. Pitt as the author of the system which has led to this most disastrous state, or at all events as having thrown around it a lustre, without which it would long since have been abandoned, I confess I cannot suffer a false or shewy sentiment, nor my admiration for his numerous unquestionably great qualities, so far to betray my understanding, that I should venerate his memory or regret his loss. His eloquence I believe to have been unrivalled and inimitable: let his statue be erected amongst those of Demosthenes and Cicero, and all who in any age or any country have been most illustrious for that fascinating art; let the workmanship be perfect, let there not be a streak in the marble. I must still insist that his ambition was of a vulgar rank, that he was a wild and heedless politician, playing most rashly, when the stake was nothing less than the safety of his country, and the liberties of Europe. Unfortunately, the peculiar errors of his character, amidst the whole cata-

logue of human infirmities, were the most unsuitable that could be found to the critical times he lived in, when if any fault had been pardonable it had been that of an over-cautious discretion. Deeply, most deeply, do we suffer for these errors; no measures can ever relieve us from their consequences. It is, however, a proud and consoling thought, that all which prudence can suggest, or vigour execute for this purpose, will be accomplished by the present administration; they will unite their efforts to give us back, as far as may be, the constitution, to restore to us the spirit of our nobles, the privileges of our people; the light we enjoy we shall spread over others, and in the day of battle, if ever that day should arrive, we shall fight irresistibly because we shall have much to lose.

With regard to this administration, to which the country are looking up with a fond imploring hope for a restoration of the constitution, and for the recovery of its high station, in the more extended affairs of the world, the general sentiment is that of exultation and triumph. There are some, however, who deem it composed of materials too discordant to last; others are disposed to entertain still more serious fears on the recollection of a former system, in which Lord Grenville bore so conspicuous a part; others again remembering the conduct of Mr. Fox, at the same period, are, in some degree alarmed, lest his principles and

opinions should have too great an ascendancy. Such feelings as these, if they who entertain them would deal fairly with themselves, if without any self-indulgence, without any submission to authority, without any bias for some favorite set of ideas, they would venture to examine the question as it is, would doubtless vanish; if Lord Grenville was once too violent on the side of prerogative, his late proceedings must, in great measure, redeem his past errors; if Mr. Fox made too firm a stand in the cause of freedom during the progress of the French revolution, it must be allowed that in common times his conduct would have been perfectly correct. Should there be any, however, who cannot overcome their fears, still must the present administration be a source of pleasure and congratulation to them, as those opinions and principles which have appeared to one and the other respectively too violent, will, of course, become in due measure neutralized, by an union of the parties who maintained the opposite sides.

There is a fourth class of men who will still stand aloof from the new administration, on the ground that all coalitions of this nature are to be deprecated, both as abstractedly wrong and as very pernicious in their consequences. To enter into an examination of the general question would perhaps be tedious, and the more so, as the last three or four years appear to supply us with facts, a slight considera-

tion of which will enable us to form a pretty correct judgment upon the subject. If a friend of Lord Grenville had defended himself on this occasion, the following observations are perhaps amongst those he would have insisted upon. " He set out in life," such a person might have said, " impressed with a strong admiration of our most excellent constitution. The principles of civil and religious liberty he conceived to be so worked up in that admirable system, as to have all the efficacy which could be given them without danger to the community; at the same time he was not slow to confess that in the well and delicately poised balance, which forms the essence of this limited monarchy, we had most to fear from the increasing influence of the crown; for this reason, he was prepared to lean to the popular parts of the constitution, nor should he have opposed any measures that might have been adopted for securing a greater purity in the representation, the reduction of our standing army in time of peace and extreme frugality in the public expenditure; just however, as he was determining to defend and improve the liberty of the subject, he perceived with equal horror and surprize, that the principles and opinions he had prepared to maintain were made the foundation of societies on the continent, particularly in Germany, the plans and designs of which were certainly most alarming, as they were enveloped in mystery; while this conduct was pursued by the Germans, it is not to be imagined, that their more lively

neighbours, the French, who receive every impression so soon, the pupils of the academy, the disciples of Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, and Diderot, would long remain inactive; at this moment, the government became involved in inextricable financial difficulties, it gave way, the people broke in, and all the opinions of the new German school became the practical maxims of the day; a succession of crimes and horrors ensued, in describing which, the future historian will rejoice that his pen is so powerless; he soon became greatly alarmed lest the danger should spread to England, and however unwillingly, he found himself compelled to abandon those principles for a time, which he was formerly prepared to enforce. This was not enough, it seemed to him necessary to proceed still further, and to transfer the zeal with which he had intended to maintain the liberty of the subject to the prerogative of the crown. No measures seemed to him too vigorous, no sacrifices too great, which might tend in the most remote degree, to save us from the spread of Jacobinism and French principles. War against France, he thought absolutely necessary for this purpose, and therefore he supported war. At home, he thought it right to enact the most severe laws, which he confessed in common times would have merited every reproach an indignant people could have heaped upon them. These measures which bore the appearance of harshness and severity were very painful to him, both on account of this appearance and because

they directly opposed those principles and feelings, which in early life he had resolved to defend, but he submitted to the overwhelming necessity of the times. At present, however, as the danger of revolution was utterly past, and as French principles were alarming, not as tending to anarchy, but to despotism, his duty now accorded with his natural inclination, and he desired to coalesce with those from whom nothing could ever have separated him, but the alarm which still appears to him to have been justly founded on the events above alluded to. It is possible that the severe measures, which were necessarily adopted at this dreadful crisis, may have given a wound to the constitutional privileges of the people, which it would now be his duty to heal. The part he took in the debate relating to the catholics of Ireland, was sufficient to prove the sincere pleasure with which he returned to his original mode of thinking, and the zeal with which he should embrace any plan for promoting the liberty of the subject. Another still more striking proof might be adduced from his conduct during the formation of the last administration, when he preferred the loss of office himself, to coming in upon narrow and exclusive grounds. If however, these observations should be thought inadequate to justify the present coalition, there is another of too imperious a nature to be resisted. He meant the danger of invasion by the immense power of France; this is a plea arising from an emergency in which greater political differences than

any that have yet taken place, might well be buried under a sense of the common danger."

The friend of Mr. Fox, in justifying himself, might perhaps have made some such observations as the following:—"He began his political career with the feelings natural to youth; enflamed with an ardent love of the principles of civil and religious liberty; he cherished these principles, not with an over-weening zeal, not with an intention to pursue them in defiance of circumstances, but because a very short experience was sufficient to shew him that they were absolutely necessary to preserve a man in a consistent line of conduct, and keep him steady to his duty; but while he felt the value of these principles, the range which he prescribed to himself for enforcing them, in this country, was at all times bounded by the English constitution: this constitution he venerated; to preserve it in its purity had been the labour, he was sorry to say, the unsuccessful labour of his life. During the progress of the French revolution he shuddered with as much horror as any man at the events of that period, and he found it necessary to school and discipline his mind, lest the alarm they were calculated to produce, should impel him to forsake principles, which he had learned to think inestimable, and the cause of that sober and rational liberty, which so far from being injured, appeared to him to have received an accession of strength

from the scenes which were acting in France. Many of his friends deserted him, under an impression of the danger of anarchy and jacobinism being so great, that all their exertions were necessary on the side of prerogative; he did not agree with them; the panic with which he perceived government to be struck, was with him, a sufficient pledge that they would take care of themselves. The regular body guards of power, he knew, were not asleep on their posts; nor did they want recruits. So far indeed from thinking it necessary to change his former conduct, he was more disposed to strengthen it; nor had any subsequent event induced him to alter his opinions on this subject. In defiance, therefore, of the threats of power and the misrepresentations and hisses of the populace, he stood firm on his station; nor indeed could he avoid entertaining the conviction, that by thus adhering to the line of conduct he had adopted, he had afforded a last asylum and refuge to the principles of rational and constitutional liberty, which otherwise would have been trampled under foot by the violence of contending factions, or expelled from the country by the exertions of a terrified government. He could have only one motive for this perseverance. He had always loved popularity; and, with the rest of his brother politicians, he had regarded office as one of the rewards of his labours. The conduct he had pursued, defeated both these views, and he could have had no con-

solation to fly to but the sense of having done his duty. This dreadful time was now past, and his former friends had returned to him. He was willing to confess that they had acted from pure and excellent motives, during their separation, and from a conviction of an overruling necessity. He would not imagine that they formed any deliberate design to overthrow the liberty of the subject; and they, he was sure, would do him the justice to allow that he abhorred equally with them, the horrors of anarchy. They might now unite under a deep impression of the dangerous situation of the country, and of the necessity there was to rouse the people to a zealous and ardent patriotism; that, like them, they might form one band, and strike with one arm. This could only be done by shewing them how many invaluable blessings remained to be contended for. That this union might be lasting, he trusted they might be prepared to make any trifling sacrifices which were not inconsistent with those severer principles of duty, which he was now grown old in maintaining; and, he felt persuaded that, as their settled opinions upon all great questions were originally the same, the efforts their enemies might make for their separation, would be totally vain."

Such observations as these may, perhaps, be considered as a fair and honourable foundation for an union between Mr. Fox and Lord Grenville. That this union may be

firm and lasting, must be the hope of every rational man in the country.

On the subject of coalitions then, much need not be said; on this and almost all other questions, the difference can be only in degree; as, under some circumstances, political coalitions are not only justifiable but necessary for the salvation of the country; (a crisis to which I believe we are now arrived) so, under others, they cannot be formed without the most pernicious consequences. Mr. Fox, it appears to me for the reasons above stated, may most honourably and fairly, and indeed, most necessarily, under an imperious sense of duty, coalesce with Lord Grenville; but I confess, I should have seen him form a coalition with Mr. Pitt with very sensible regret. I admire the softness and generosity of temper which enable him to subdue and resign whatever feelings of resentment may have arisen in a long political contest, when the welfare of his country appears to him to demand such a sacrifice; yet he was so separated from this minister in feeling, in habit, and character; and the differences between them had been so often and so continually enflamed by debate into the most direct hostilities, that a coalition, I fear, would only have confirmed the conviction, the people are now too ready to entertain, (and it is the most dangerous and fatal conviction they can entertain) that political virtue is but a name, bandied about

from mouth to mouth for the purposes of political aggrandizement and ambition; and that its reality does not exist. I regard an impression of this sort on the public mind to be in its consequences the most fatal that can be imagined; a disbelief in public virtue is followed immediately by a total indifference to all public affairs, to the constitution, to invasion, to all that in better times would rouse and animate to exertion; for we may rest assured, the precept of the moralist is true upon every scale, that principle, the sense of the blessings of liberty and virtue, an affection for the privileges of the constitution, and a conviction that such feelings have taken root amongst our rulers, will be our best, I will add, our only support in the approaching time of peril. Let Italy prove this; let divided and corrupted Switzerland prove this; let Austria prove this. If at the peace of Amiens Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox had fairly united; their coalition, though even then its consequences, as far as regards the impression on the mind of the people, would have been greatly alarming, might perhaps have been excused on the grounds I have taken for justifying that which forms the basis of the present administration. But after the peace of Amiens, when all revolutionary alarms were decidedly past, after a transient union in opposition to Mr. Addington, Mr. Pitt declared a new war against Mr. Fox, first personally, by forsaking his old friends and partizans, who were now acting with this latter gentleman, and

afterwards on principle, by opposing the Catholic claims, that is, by opposing him on that very question which had in fact been the ostensible and public ground of their union. Mr. Pitt is dead, and we are told we should adopt the language of mere personal rivals, and exclaim, "all his good now blazes, all his evil lies buried with him." I bow to those feelings of sorrow and regret for the loss of a revered patron and a cherished friend, which may have dictated such an exclamation. Those feelings are sacred, they are above criticism. On the question, however, of an eminent man's public merit and character, they cannot be allowed to prevent a severe discussion, and from such a discussion, the friends of Mr. Pitt will not shrink. To be the subject of disquisition after death is the privilege and the penalty of greatness. It is not indeed in the nature of things that any man should be minister for twenty years, and that the consequences of his conduct, whether good or evil, should be buried with him. I acknowledge the proud perseverence, the unmanaging intrepidity, the unwearied activity, the unbroken firmness, the personal disinterestedness, the lofty unfailing presence of mind, the powerful and gorgeous eloquence of Mr. Pitt; he was also the son of Chatham, and his father's glory sheds around his memory something of a protecting lustre: this is his good; let it blaze; had his great qualities been brought out into action by the best sort of ambition, his funeral applause would have been

pronounced by a grateful nation; that it was otherwise, his disappointed and suffering country, and all men who love to connect exalted virtue with great talents and splendid accomplishments, will for ever lament; his ambition was the love of power, it had no connexion with fame; the good of his country was entirely subservient to it; it was a base sordid appetite for power. The friends with whom he connected himself, were the beings of his creation, and the objects of his patronage; their applause he preferred to that which might have arisen from men of acknowledged eminence, either in rank or ability. To enflame the popular sentiment, to appeal to all the strong and equivocal passions, to national jealousy, to the love of glory, to the sense of shame, to combine these, which in the wisest men are so apt to outstep their due bounds into one violent feeling for the sway and government of the populace; when this failed to inspire them with terrors from within and without; and in the midst of all the rancour, and violence, and uproar occasioned by such an impulse, to remain above, and direct the swelling turbulence to his own purposes: such were his arts, and such was his triumph. Yet, while he employed the bolder means for obtaining and preserving his authority, he sometimes stooped to those which were more indirect and low, nor was he always able to resist a mean unmanly triumph over his illustrious though unsuccessful rival. Perhaps no action of his life displayed more of his real charac-

ter than the formation of the last administration. There was then no bias on his mind, from the impression, which was supposed to palliate and excuse much of his former conduct, a fear of French revolutionary principles, when calmly and deliberately deserting those tried friends, who had so long fought by his side in what he had deemed the hour of peril, with a degree of self-elevation perfectly unexampled, he took upon himself the sole administration of the country in the most critical times ever known. There were a few who seemed to measure his talents by his daring, but the wiser part of mankind, saw in his conduct only that bold presumption, which being supported by showy and splendid talents, would hold forth to the people high and brilliant hopes, but to disappoint them most wretchedly, and which must terminate in evils of stupendous magnitude, though the most gloomy could scarcely have imagined that in so short a space of time its consequences would have been the utter destruction of the second military power in Europe, and what may now be called, without much hyperbole, the omnipotence of France. Never was there a man who formed such vast designs with means so inadequate, and whose failure was marked out by such widely ruinous consequences.

In whatever way we examine these consequences, as they are displayed in our present situation, we have every

reason to lament, condemn, and dread their farther progress. We are struggling for our safety, for our existence, and yet our means of defence are so ill prepared, that if, by some unfortunate concurrence of circumstances a foreign army were to land on our coast, we should have cause to fear, not conquest, (that supposition cannot be entertained for a moment) but evils of considerable duration, as well as of the most awful magnitude. Our diplomatic affairs have been so conducted, that we have lost much of our high character amongst foreign nations, not for skill and talents only, but for integrity and honor. I am not speaking of the justice of this aspersion, but of the fact. Our finances are involved in unheard of difficulties, the national debt is approaching to seven hundred millions; and while we are compelled to increase our already enormous expenditure, taxation has long been pushed forward far beyond its constitutional and almost its natural and possible limits. Of the state of the constitution itself, something has been said in the preceding pages. That it is so deranged and disordered, as scarcely to retain any of its original features is evident, on the short and most inadequate view here exhibited. Indeed, on a dispassionate investigation of our present condition, the only bright spots on which it is possible to fix, are the achievements of our navy, and the unimpaired excellence of our courts of justice. These are such splendid exceptions as

to afford a considerable compensation for the suffering, degradation, and danger, which bear upon us in every other direction.

From the present administration however, we may expect every effort in the work of reformation and restoration; all past evidence is in their favor; and though we cannot expect to rise as rapidly as we have fallen, yet, as by rashness and imbecility we have sunk into the most unexampled calamity, we may hope for a constantly progressive elevation under the guidance of the opposite virtues. The various parts of administration (with some exceptions not very material, and some oversights which may be easily corrected) are filled so well, the whole public service is so admirably distributed, that it surely is not presumptuous to think that we shall not remain stationary in our present disgraceful and unfortunate state. Many might wish that Mr. Fox possessed an uninterrupted ascendancy in his majesty's councils; but when we compare the good we enjoy with the evils we have escaped, we have every reason to congratulate ourselves, and to surround the throne with sincere and heartfelt acknowledgments. It would be superfluous to dwell upon the merits of men the people have known and tried; and to some of whom, they are now anxious to pay the long arrear of gratitude and applause, which under the misrepresentations of ambitious or malicious enemies, they have

hitherto refused; yet, perhaps, after so much censure and despondency, it may be pardonable to indulge for a moment in panegyric and hope. Lord Grenville by his late conduct has proved that the alarm he professed to feel during the progress of the French revolution was sincere. He has most ably and admirably supported the true and genuine principles of the constitution, in defiance of the allurements of office, and the ties of a long attachment. His principles and opinions on this latter subject, did him infinite honor, and must ever be considered as marking out the precise line, both in a political and moral point of view, which every man should adopt in similar circumstances. His speech also, on the catholic question, marked the liberality as well as vigour of his mind. But while the public are disposed to confide in Lord Grenville, it is Mr. Fox on whom they depend for restoring the country to its station in the world, and all Europe to a state of tolerably well balanced tranquillity. The powers of his mind are acknowledged to be most extraordinary, and in his heart and his temper there seems no other fault, but too great a subservience to his friends, and a simplicity too much inclining him to retirement and repose. He is just the man to direct the councils of a limited monarch, he is exactly formed to rule in a constitution like ours. It would be as easy for water to run up hill, or a projected stone to remain for ever in the air, as for Mr. Fox to pursue a harsh, severe, and corroding system of government. He

is a patriot from nature as well as principle, and therefore, there can be no struggle between his inclination and his understanding, to impede the force of his exertions. That a man so endowed should have passed the greatest part of his life in warning us against calamities without the power to prevent them, that in the midst of this his painful and laborious service, he should have been covered with obloquy and reproach, is nothing new amongst the crimes and follies of mankind. Instances of the same nature are universal, and we may rest assured, that in the future history of these times, the neglect and contumely Mr. Fox has experienced, will be an indelible and eternal disgrace to the English character. Of the young men who are called to take a part in the new administration, Lord Henry Petty is the most conspicuous. All parties seem to agree in holding him forth as our best promise and our surest hope. I believe indeed the public have judged well, that they have fixed their confidence well. His public merits are but the spread and enlargement of every private excellence, and for this reason, there is a regularity and a legitimacy in his virtues, which give the world a sufficient and satisfactory pledge, that they will end only with his life. His ambition appears to be of that high order, which aims at power for the sake of supporting the principles of the constitution, which appeals for its reward to the best part of the present generation, and to the suffrages of posterity, and thus the only passion which

could have betrayed him into error, is itself a security for his virtue. In the midst of affluence he has undertaken an office of great difficulty and labour, and thus proves the purity of his views and the ardor of his patriotism. In the transactions of business, the firmness, strength, and perspicuity of his understanding, combined with the liberality and simplicity of his character will attract confidence; and his eloquence has been already found peculiarly adapted to embellish what is dry and elucidate what is obscure. Perhaps its leading feature is an ornamented clearness, singularly fitted for financial questions, while it is an indisputable proof of a sound judgment, and a highly cultivated taste.

In leaving this subject, it is impossible not to say a word on the new government of Ireland. The Irish are a warm, lively people, and as they would perhaps have entertained some unfortunate prejudices, (unjust no doubt) against a lord lieutenant, whom they might have supposed to have derived his maxims of government from the east, where our politics are not remarkable for mildness and conciliation, they will doubtless throw themselves into the arms of the representative of the family of Russel, who both in ancient and modern times, have so illustriously distinguished themselves in support of civil and religious liberty. All men surely will agree, that there could not be a more

judicious measure than the appointment of the Duke of Bedford to that station.

We must not, I fear, be allowed to expect that the wise measures adopted in this reign, with regard to the Roman Catholics, will be carried into full effect, by repealing the laws, which still remain against them; but while Mr. Fox and his friends remain in office, there will be a spirit of conciliation from above, which will be answered by the affection and gratitude of the people, and we may still entertain a hope that, at no great distance of time, any civil restriction on modes of faith, both here and in Ireland, will be deemed as monstrous in political as in moral science.*

It remains for the people to be true to themselves, while they feel and express their thanks to their sovereign for having formed an administration in which they may fully

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* No subject ever received a more full discussion, both in and out of parliament, than the situation of the Irish Catholics; and the beneficial effect on the public mind has been singularly striking. On the general state of Ireland, "The Inquiry into the causes of Popular Discontents," and on the catholic question, the pamphlet, entitled "Thoughts on the Protestant Ascendancy," and one lately published by Sir John Throckmorton, together with the debates in parliament, leave nothing to be added on the subject.

confide: let them cordially unite to give the measures of such an administration all possible support. There is much to be done—much to be added—much to be restored. A most strict and rigid reform is absolutely necessary in almost every department of the state, and as all reforms are invidious and difficult, the decisive concurrence of the people may be requisite to enable the ministers to effect them. If any insuperable obstacles should prevent the repeal of pernicious acts, or the enactment of new laws for redeeming and securing the liberty of the subject, still by the continuance of the present administration in office, a new spirit will be created which may be attended with consequences, almost as beneficial as the positive exertions of legislative wisdom. From such a spirit only can arise that patriotic vigour, on which we shall have to depend for safety, in the perilous times we are about to encounter. When the feelings of the whole nation, from the aristocracy to the populace, are swallowed up in the pursuit of commercial advantages, or the enjoyment of luxuries which commerce alone can supply; when apathy, voluptuousness, and the love of gain are our sole characteristics; when the only virtue to which we even aspire is justice, and that as it appears at the exchange, rather than at the bar or in the pulpit; when the national degradation is receiving strength and darkness from the fallen state of the continent; into such a cold inanimate mass to infuse the least of the sentiment of

constitutional liberty, will be such a substantial benefit to the country, that performing so great a service ministers will be justified in retaining their offices, though they find themselves unable to accomplish those positive measures they have been accustomed so warmly and earnestly to recommend. For this most salutary purpose, let the people meet the government with ardour and cordiality; let every man in the country habituate himself to bring home to his understanding and his heart the state in which we are placed; let him guard himself from those feelings of false honor, of hollow pride, which, both in public and private affairs, necessarily lead to destruction; let him accustom himself to reflect, that if the days of our glory are past, we shall only sink still lower by acting as if we still possessed it; let him remember that there may be a dignity in adversity almost as imposing as the brilliancy of prosperity, but that this dignity is utterly forfeited by restless inadequate attempts to retrieve affairs which can only be improved by waiting with a proud repose, a lofty, guarded self-collection, for opportunities which must be lost by being anticipated; let him suspect those showy orators, who represent the powers of the continent as only preparing for more vigorous and successful attacks upon the greatness of France; let him discuss the merits of the present administration with his friends, with his family; let him compare them with the last; let him contrast that rashness, with this wisdom,

that imbecility, with this strength, that finesse and chicanery, with this liberality and candour, that exclusion, with this comprehension, that love of power, with this love of country, that sacrifice to place, with this sacrifice to principle, that obscurity, with this eminence in rank and talent, that proved and decided failure, with this well-founded hope. Should Mr. Fox possess his due weight in his Majesty's councils, in other words, should he and his friends remain in office, we may presume to hope, that though we shall never again be what we have been, yet considering the fallen state of the whole civilized world, we shall still hold the first place amongst nations. We have the power of salvation in our hands, if, like the sinking spendthrift, we do not, in the first instance, shut our eyes to our real situation, or perceiving it, refuse to obey that vigorous and correcting discipline which can alone save us from destruction.

THE END.

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